EXT. STREET CORNER - HOT DOG STAND - DAY

Two COPS (30s), two BUSINESSPEOPLE (30s and 40s), a JUNKIE (early 20s), two NUNS (50s and 60s), two RABBIS (both 60s), a MIME (early 30s), and a SUMO WRESTLER (mid 30s) with a chinchilla stand in line at a hot dog stand on a busy street corner.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
(slight Indian accent)
Once upon a time, there lived a happy hot dog vendor named Jaffrey, owner of Jaffrey’s Hot Dog Stand.

JAFFREY (late 60s), a short and stout Middle Eastern man, runs the stand. He greets all with a default scowl and lack of warmth or personality.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Dear members of the audience, do not be fooled. Jaffrey is a happy man. On the inside, mainly, but happy nonetheless.

The businesswoman orders.

BUSINESSWOMAN
Hi, I’d like a New Yorker with no onions and a water, please.

Jaffrey prepares the order, grunting as he works. The woman glances at the sun.

BUSINESSWOMAN
The news called for rain today. I’m glad it’s holding off.

Jaffrey doesn’t respond.

BUSINESSWOMAN
Last week, I didn’t think we’d ever get a chance to stop by here. It just kept raining and raining!

He wraps up her food and rings her up on the register.

JAFFREY
(medium Indian accent)
Five dollar.

She hands him a five and puts one in the tip jar.
BUSINESSWOMAN
Thank you! Have a nice day!

He doesn’t thank her as she walks away. He waves on the next customer, the junkie, and greets him with the same scowl.

JAFFREY
Yes?

The junkie’s stoned and really excited, in contrast to Jaffrey’s cold indifference.

JUNKIE
Give me a junkyard dog, my man!

JAFFREY
Everythings on it?

The junkie stares off into space a moment, oblivious to the question. Jaffrey coughs. No answer. He jabs a finger in the junkie’s face.

JAFFREY
Hey you, young man. Wakes up! The sun are out, time to get your head out of the smokes and clouds.

The junkie snaps to.

JUNKIE
Oh, give me everything!
(singing)
I want it all...I want it all...and I want it now, now, now!

Jaffrey shakes his head, piles on peppers and onions, mustard and ketchup, sprinkles cheese on top, and wraps it up.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Deep down--perhaps deeper beyond that--Jaffrey cares a great deal for his customers, hoping to instill in them “good thoughts, good words, and good deeds”—the Zoroastrian way.

JAFFREY
Five dollar.

The junkie slips off his ratty sneaker and dumps it on the counter, beside the lit faravahar candle holder.
NARRATOR (V.O.)
The Zoroastrian way. Wherever there is light, evil cannot survive and order thrives. From his hot dog stand, Jaffrey keeps this light burning in a dark world.

Some bills, coins, junk, and dirt fall out of the sneaker. The junkie picks out the right amount and hands it over.

JUNKIE
There ya go, my man...five dollar!

The junkie scrapes the rest of the junk back into his shoe, slips it on, and staggers away with his lunch. Jaffrey shakes his head.

The candles go out. Jaffrey doesn’t notice.

JAFFREY
(to himself)
I wishes he would get his bingos together...

The nuns are about to step up, but AHRIMAN’s hoof stops them. Ahriman, a red-skinned, muscular, horned imp with a bifurcated tail and goat legs stands before Jaffrey, ornate pitchfork in hand. He grins at Jaffrey.

AHRIMAN
Greetings, Jaffrey...

Jaffrey rolls his eyes and scowls even more.

JAFFREY
Where did you comes from?

Ahriman’s offended.

AHRIMAN
From roaming throughout the earth, going to and fro on it. (beat) I’m here to help you.

JAFFREY
Why does I need your help?

AHRIMAN
From the look on your face, you could use a little...excitement! It’s little wonder that you don’t inspire people.
Jaffrey tries to crack a smile, but goes back to the scowl.

JAFFREY
I’m very excited to be here.
Yippee, woohoo, yee-haws. Now,
states your business or be gonzos.

Ahriman surveys the customers in line, then turns to Jaffrey.

AHRIMAN
How much do you want for them?

JAFFREY
What do you means?

AHRIMAN
How much would you want for their
souls? That’s why you’re selling
hot dogs to them: to save their
souls. Let me save you the
trouble...

Jaffrey peers deeply into Ahriman’s mischievous eyes.

JAFFREY
Who are you?

AHRIMAN
The one ordained with the power to
do so. Think of it...you could
retire!

Jaffrey straightens up.

JAFFREY
There is only one God: Ahura Mazda.
Only he have the power to give or
take souls. You are not Ahura
Mazda. Who are you?

Ahriman resigns.

AHRIMAN
Who do you think, Zoroastrian?

JAFFREY
I do not knows.
(shrugs)
Ahriman?

Ahriman grins.
AHRIMAN
You study the Gathas, I see. Now that formalities are out of the way, onto business. How much for their souls?

JAFFREY
What do you wants in return?

AHRIMAN
I’ll take anything: dollars, yen, blood...

Ahriman picks up a mustard bottle and squirts it on Jaffrey’s shirt.

AHRIMAN
I’d even take mustard. But since you likely don’t have enough mustard for me and I don’t care for it...how about a little game?

JAFFREY
I do not plays games, demon.

Ahriman picks up a ketchup bottle and examines it. Jaffrey watches this and slowly leans away. Ahriman puts it down. Jaffrey relaxes.

AHRIMAN
This one’s easy: make your customers do good deeds for three hours without using words. No writing, no mumbling. Just action.

JAFFREY
If I do not play?

AHRIMAN
Then, I’ll help myself to them. Bodies and souls. Keep in mind, if I wasn’t so generous, you’d all be dead already. No tricks.

JAFFREY
So I have to gets these people to do good deeds without talking? For three hours?

AHRIMAN
Precisely. I want to show you just how much “wisdom” you impart to before this sadist of a satyr has a ball bringing you to your end.
Jaffrey surveys his customers.

JAFFREY
Okay. When does we beg--

Ahriman moves aside. The nuns step up. Jaffrey motions for them to order.

AHRIMAN
Jaffrey, don’t be too sure these kind nuns will understand the nonsensical flailing of your hands and do a good deed or two.

The nuns step around Ahriman and order.

NUN #1
We’d like two plain hot dogs each. On buns. No condiments.

NUN #2
...and salt and vinegar chips!

Nun #1 glares at Nun #2, who’s embarrassed and shrinks.

Jaffrey gets to work, soon producing four dogs in foil...and a bag of salt & vinegar chips. He tries to use his fingers to show the price. The nuns don’t understand. He punches it up on the register. They nod and hand him money and leave.

AHRIMAN
Not good enough.

Ahriman taps his pitchfork and the nuns disappear, shrieking in agony. Their food falls to the ground. The crowd looks on in terror.

The cops draw their guns and the rabbis try to leave. Ahriman shoots them a cold gaze of caution. They fall back in line.

AHRIMAN
(to Jaffrey)
Just because you completed the transaction without speaking doesn’t mean you win. By tomorrow, they would’ve forgotten this happened. Except for the indigestion from those chips.

Jaffrey glares at Ahriman, but lights up at the next customer: the mime. He starts signing to the mime. The mime nods and signs back. Jaffrey fixes his hot dog.
The mime steps to the side and motions for the nervous rabbis to order.

RABBI #1
We’ll take four reuben dogs.

Jaffrey gets to work and punches up the total on the register. The rabbis pull out their money, but the mime stops them and gives money to Jaffrey. The rabbis are astounded and take their food.

RABBI #1
Why, thank you, young man!

The rabbis invite the sumo wrestler to order, money out.

RABBI #2
Come on, young fella. Order away, we’ll pay your vay!

The wrestler grins. Ahriman is disgusted by the chinchilla.

SUMO
(to Jaffrey)
A Windy City dog. All toppings.

Jaffrey fixes the wrestler’s order and gives it to him, the rabbis hand Jaffrey the money. Jaffrey smiles. The customers notice and smile themselves.

One of the cops steps up and the wrestler stands to the side, grinning.

SUMO
Go ahead, officers. It’s on me.

COP
(to Jaffrey)
I’d like a brat with mustard, onions, and relish. Plain chips.

Jaffrey complies. The sumo wrestler tries to shuffle the chinchilla and reach for his wallet. Jaffrey offers to hold the animal and it’s given to him. He pets it. The wrestler then puts the money on the counter. Jaffrey hands him the change, but he refuses.

SUMO
Keep it, dear sir. Let it feed the others.

Jaffrey grins, hands over the chinchilla and food. The wrestler waddles away, beaming. Ahriman fumes.
AHRIMAN
You used sign language with that mime! You’ve lost.

Ahriman raises his pitchfork, but Jaffrey grabs it.

JAFFREY
I learn sign language just for him, because he’s deaf. You says no words. I useds my hands, instead!

Jaffrey laughs.

JAFFREY
If you wants a fight, you gets one.

Jaffrey reaches into his cart, pulls out an old WWII helmet and a scimitar. He notices the faravahar candles are out and re-lights them with a Bic lighter. Ahriman draws his weapon.

They step to the side and Ahriman takes the first swipe at Jaffrey. Jaffrey blocks and pushes Ahriman back. Ahriman takes another swipe and misses. Jaffrey strikes the back of Ahriman’s leg. The blow is absorbed.

AHRIMAN
Not bad, Jaffrey. You’re weak...old...feeble-minded...but a better opponent than I expected!

Ahriman smashes Jaffrey’s helmet with the fork prongs, knocking him to the ground. The dented helmet rolls away and the scimitar is out of reach. He tries to crawl away, but Ahriman kicks him hard in the posterior, into the cart.

A display bottle of beer and the lighter fall to the ground. Ahriman approaches. Jaffrey snaps into action, smashes the top of the bottle, tosses the beer on Ahriman’s furry legs, and lights it. A blaze ensues.

Ahriman cries out in pain. The flames consume his body. Jaffrey grabs the pitchfork, taps it and impales Ahriman.

JAFFREY
Let the light of truth burn brightly, Evil One!

Ahriman falls to his knees, still ablaze.

AHRIMAN
Your light shines dimly in this place. Keep it lit while you’re able, mortal. I will return.
Ahriman gives up the ghost, the fire goes out, and only a charred form remains. The wind picks up and blows the sooty ash into oblivion, leaving nothing behind.

The crowd is silent, all eyes glued to Jaffrey, their savior.

JAFFREY
Is everyone okay?

The people look themselves over. They nod.

JAFFREY
Good. Sorry for the trouble. It seems someone don't like my hot dogs! But you all does, right?

ALL
Yeah!

Jaffrey grins.

JAFFREY
Good, good. See? I smile. You’re good people. I loves serving you. Remember: good thoughts, good words, good deeds. Now, who was next in line?

Cop #2 steps up and orders, with Cop #1 nearby, money out.

JAFFREY
So how's your day been, sir?

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And the truth shines on...

FADE OUT.